

New Communications Policy

NASA's Evolving Communications Policy

The role of science missions in NASA communications has evolved since missions were directed to propose and spend 1% of their total budget on education and public outreach (EPO). In 2014:

- NASA's policy documents established new definitions for communications.
 - Traditional news and social media, multimedia and public outreach and engagement were consolidated.
- EPO funding was removed from mission budgets.
- Education activities and funding were consolidated within SMD, under the Director for Science Engagement and Partnerships
 - Activities and funding were restructured along science disciplines, not missions.
 - The Director for Science Engagement and Partnerships has responsibility for integrated education strategies within SMD.

NASA's Definition of Communications

NASA has defined communications as follows:

- A comprehensive set of activities to effectively convey, and provide an understanding and inspiration about NASA's work, its objectives and benefits to target audiences, the public and other stakeholders, including NASA employees.
- These activities are intended to promote interest and foster participation in NASA's endeavors, and to develop exposure to, and appreciation for, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

NOTE: This SMD policy does not cover technical communications directed at the scientific and technical community including scientific papers, technical reports, and web sites serving mission data and other technical information.

Roles and Responsibilities

NASA Center or JPL Office of Communications

- Missions must use the communications office of a NASA center or JPL to manage the communications plan and activities.
- These communications offices will be responsible for leading, coordinating, and executing mission communications activities -- in coordination with the mission's Principal Investigator (PI) for PI-led missions -- and with approval of Headquarters SMD and Office of Communications.
- The communications office develops the communications plan with the project and PI during Phase B of the mission.
- Mission-related communications are funded from the project budget (but not within the PI's mission cost cap).

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal Investigators

- The PI is a key spokesperson for the mission – along with NASA officials -- and is integral in communicating mission updates, science, and new discoveries.
- The PI provides content, analysis, and context for communications activities to convey an understanding of the mission, its objectives and benefits to target audiences, the public, and other stakeholders.
- The PI coordinates with the designated NASA center communications office for all mission-related communications activities.
 - All mission news releases are reviewed by the PI (or designee).
 - In the case of incompatible views, NASA has final decision on release of public products, while ensuring that scientific and technical information remains accurate and unfiltered.